

“Angels” Catholic Encyclopedia

(Latin *angelus*; Greek *aggelos*; from the Hebrew for "one going" or "one sent"; messenger). The word is used in Hebrew to denote indifferently either a divine or human messenger. The Septuagint renders it by *aggelos* which also has both significations. The Latin version, however, distinguishes the divine or spirit-messenger from the human, rendering the original in the one case by *angelus* and in the other by *legatus* or more generally by *nuntius*. In a few passages the Latin version is misleading, the word *angelus* being used where *nuntius* would have better expressed the meaning, e.g. Isaiah 18:2; 33:3-6.

It is with the spirit-messenger alone that we are here concerned. We have to discuss

- the meaning of the term in the Bible,
- the offices of the angels,
- the names assigned to the angels,
- the distinction between good and evil spirits,
- the divisions of the angelic choirs,
- the question of angelic appearances, and
- the development of the scriptural idea of angels.

The angels are represented throughout the Bible as a body of spiritual beings intermediate between God and men: "You have made him (man) a little less than the angels" (Psalm 8:6). They, equally with man, are created beings; "praise ye Him, all His angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts . . . for He spoke and they were made. He commanded and they were created" (Psalm 148:2-5; Colossians 1:16-17). That the angels were created was laid down in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). The decree "Firmiter" against the Albigenses declared both the fact that they were created and that men were created after them. This decree was repeated by the Vatican Council, "Dei Filius". We mention it here because the words: "He that liveth for ever created all things together" (Ecclesiasticus 18:1) have been held to prove a simultaneous creation of all things; but it is generally conceded that "together" (*simul*) may here mean "equally", in the sense that all things were "alike" created. They are spirits; the writer of the Epistle

to the Hebrews says: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister to them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14).

Attendants at God's throne

It is as messengers that they most often figure in the Bible, but, as St. Augustine, and after him St. Gregory, expresses it: *angelus est nomen officii* ("angel is the name of the office") and expresses neither their essential nature nor their essential function, viz.: that of attendants upon God's throne in that court of heaven of which Daniel has left us a vivid picture:

I behold till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days sat: His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool: His throne like flames of fire: the wheels of it like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him: the judgment sat and the books were opened. (Daniel 7:9-10; cf. also Psalm 96:7; Psalm 102:20; Isaiah 6, etc.)

This function of the angelic host is expressed by the word "assistance" (Job 1:6; 2:1), and our Lord refers to it as their perpetual occupation (Matthew 18:10). More than once we are told of seven angels whose special function it is thus to "stand before God's throne" (Tobit 12:15; Revelation 8:2-5). The same thought may be intended by "the angel of His presence" (Isaiah 63:9) an expression which also occurs in the pseudo-epigraphical "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs".

God's messengers to mankind

But these glimpses of life beyond the veil are only occasional. The angels of the Bible generally appear in the role of God's messengers to mankind. They are His instruments by whom He communicates His will to men, and in Jacob's vision they are depicted as ascending and descending the ladder which stretches from earth to heaven while the Eternal Father gazes upon the wanderer below. It was an angel who

found Agar in the wilderness (Genesis 16); angels drew Lot out of Sodom; an angel announces to Gideon that he is to save his people; an angel foretells the birth of Samson (Judges 13), and the angel Gabriel instructs Daniel (Daniel 8:16), though he is not called an angel in either of these passages, but "the man Gabriel" (9:21). The same heavenly spirit announced the birth of St. John the Baptist and the Incarnation of the Redeemer, while tradition ascribes to him both the message to the shepherds (Luke 2:9), and the most glorious mission of all, that of strengthening the King of Angels in His Agony (Luke 22:43). The spiritual nature of the angels is manifested very clearly in the account which Zacharias gives of the revelations bestowed upon him by the ministry of an angel. The prophet depicts the angel as speaking "in him". He seems to imply that he was conscious of an interior voice which was not that of God but of His messenger. The Massoretic text, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate all agree in thus describing the communications made by the angel to the prophet. It is a pity that the "Revised Version" should, in apparent defiance of the above-named texts, obscure this trait by persistently giving the rendering: "the angel that talked with me: instead of "within me" (cf. Zechariah 1:9-14; 2:3; 4:5; 5:10).

Such appearances of angels generally last only so long as the delivery of their message requires, but frequently their mission is prolonged, and they are represented as the constituted guardians of the nations at some particular crisis, e.g. during the Exodus (Exodus 14:19; Baruch 6:6). Similarly it is the common view of the Fathers that by "the prince of the Kingdom of the Persians" (Daniel 10:13-21) we are to understand the angel to whom was entrusted the spiritual care of that kingdom, and we may perhaps see in the "man of Macedonia" who appeared to St. Paul at Troas, the guardian angel of that country (Acts 16:9). The Septuagint (Deuteronomy 32:8), has preserved for us a fragment of information on this head, though it is difficult to gauge its exact meaning: "When the Most High divided the nations, when He scattered the children of Adam, He established the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God". How large a part the ministry of angels played, not merely in Hebrew theology, but in the religious ideas of other nations as well, appears from the expression "like to an angel of God". It is three times used of David (2 Samuel 14:17-20; 14:27) and once by Achis of Geth (1 Samuel 29:9).

It is even applied by Esther to Assuerus (Esther 15:16), and St. Stephen's face is said to have looked "like the face of an angel" as he stood before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:15).

Personal guardians

Throughout the Bible we find it repeatedly implied that each individual soul has its tutelary angel. Thus Abraham, when sending his steward to seek a wife for Isaac, says: "He will send His angel before thee" (Genesis 24:7). The words of the ninetieth Psalm which the devil quoted to our Lord (Matthew 4:6) are well known, and Judith accounts for her heroic deed by saying: "As the Lord liveth, His angel hath been my keeper" (13:20). These passages and many like them (Genesis 16:6-32; Hosea 12:4; 1 Kings 19:5; Acts 12:7; Psalm 33:8), though they will not of themselves demonstrate the doctrine that every individual has his appointed guardian angel, receive their complement in our Saviour's words: "See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in Heaven" (Matthew 18:10), words which illustrate the remark of St. Augustine: "What lies hidden in the Old Testament, is made manifest in the New". Indeed, the book of Tobias seems intended to teach this truth more than any other, and St. Jerome in his commentary on the above words of our Lord says: "The dignity of a soul is so great, that each has a guardian angel from its birth." The general doctrine that the angels are our appointed guardians is considered to be a point of faith, but that each individual member of the human race has his own individual guardian angel is not of faith (*de fide*); the view has, however, such strong support from the Doctors of the Church that it would be rash to deny it (cf. St. Jerome, *supra*). Peter the Lombard (Sentences, lib. II, dist. xi) was inclined to think that one angel had charge of several individual human beings. St. Bernard's beautiful homilies (11-14) on the ninetieth Psalm breathe the spirit of the Church without however deciding the question. The Bible represents the angels not only as our guardians, but also as actually interceding for us. "The angel Raphael (Tobit 12:12) says: "I offered thy prayer to the Lord" (cf. Job 5:1 (Septuagint), and 33:23 (Vulgate); Apocalypse 8:4). The Catholic cult of the angels is thus thoroughly scriptural. Perhaps the earliest explicit

declaration of it is to be found in St. Ambrose's words: "We should pray to the angels who are given to us as guardians" (De Viduis, ix); (cf. St. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus* XX.21). An undue cult of angels was reprobated by St. Paul (Colossians 2:18), and that such a tendency long remained in the same district is evidenced by Canon 35 of the Synod of Laodicea.

As divine agents governing the world

The foregoing passages, especially those relating to the angels who have charge of various districts, enable us to understand the practically unanimous view of the Fathers that it is the angels who put into execution God's law regarding the physical world. The Semitic belief in *genii* and in spirits which cause good or evil is well known, and traces of it are to be found in the Bible. Thus the pestilence which devastated Israel for David's sin in numbering the people is attributed to an angel whom David is said to have actually seen (2 Samuel 24:15-17), and more explicitly, I Par., xxi, 14-18). Even the wind rustling in the tree-tops was regarded as an angel (2 Samuel 5:23-24; 1 Chronicles 14:14, 15). This is more explicitly stated with regard to the pool of Probaticea (John 5:1-4), though there is some doubt about the text; in that passage the disturbance of the water is said to be due to the periodic visits of an angel. The Semites clearly felt that all the orderly harmony of the universe, as well as interruptions of that harmony, were due to God as their originator, but were carried out by His ministers. This view is strongly marked in the "Book of Jubilees" where the heavenly host of good and evil angels is every interfering in the material universe. Maimonides (Directorium Perplexorum, iv and vi) is quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologicæ* I.1.3) as holding that the Bible frequently terms the powers of nature angels, since they manifest the omnipotence of God (cf. St. Jerome, In Mich., vi, 1, 2; P.L., iv, col. 1206).

Hierarchical organization

Though the angels who appear in the earlier works of the Old Testament are strangely impersonal and are overshadowed by the importance of the message they bring or the work they do, there are

not wanting hints regarding the existence of certain ranks in the heavenly army.

After Adam's fall Paradise is guarded against our First Parents by cherubim who are clearly God's ministers, though nothing is said of their nature. Only once again do the cherubim figure in the Bible, viz., in Ezechiel's marvellous vision, where they are described at great length (Ezekiel 1), and are actually called *cherub* in Ezechiel 10. The Ark was guarded by two cherubim, but we are left to conjecture what they were like. It has been suggested with great probability that we have their counterpart in the winged bulls and lions guarding the Assyrian palaces, and also in the strange winged men with hawks' heads who are depicted on the walls of some of their buildings. The seraphim appear only in the vision of Isaias 6:6.

Mention has already been made of the mystic seven who stand before God, and we seem to have in them an indication of an inner cordon that surrounds the throne. The term *archangel* occurs only in St. Jude and 1 Thessalonians 4:15; but St. Paul has furnished us with two other lists of names of the heavenly cohorts. He tells us (Ephesians 1:21) that Christ is raised up "above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion"; and, writing to the Colossians (1:16), he says: "In Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers." It is to be noted that he uses two of these names of the powers of darkness when (2:15) he talks of Christ as "despoiling the principalities and powers . . . triumphing over them in Himself". And it is not a little remarkable that only two verses later he warns his readers not to be seduced into any "religion of angels". He seems to put his seal upon a certain lawful angelology, and at the same time to warn them against indulging superstition on the subject. We have a hint of such excesses in the Book of Enoch, wherein, as already stated, the angels play a quite disproportionate part. Similarly Josephus tells us (Bel. Jud., II, viii, 7) that the Essenes had to take a vow to preserve the names of the angels.

We have already seen how (Daniel 10:12-21) various districts are allotted to various angels who are termed their princes, and the same feature reappears still more markedly in the Apocalyptic "angels of the

seven churches", though it is impossible to decide what is the precise signification of the term. These seven Angels of the Churches are generally regarded as being the Bishops occupying these sees. St. Gregory Nazianzen in his address to the Bishops at Constantinople twice terms them "Angels", in the language of the Apocalypse.

The treatise "De Coelesti Hierarchia", which is ascribed to St. Denis the Areopagite, and which exercised so strong an influence upon the Scholastics, treats at great length of the hierarchies and orders of the angels. It is generally conceded that this work was not due to St. Denis, but must date some centuries later. Though the doctrine it contains regarding the choirs of angels has been received in the Church with extraordinary unanimity, no proposition touching the angelic hierarchies is binding on our faith. The following passages from St. Gregory the Great (Hom. 34, In Evang.) will give us a clear idea of the view of the Church's doctors on the point:

We know on the authority of Scripture that there are nine orders of angels, viz., Angels, Archangels, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Dominations, Throne, Cherubim and Seraphim. That there are Angels and Archangels nearly every page of the Bible tell us, and the books of the Prophets talk of Cherubim and Seraphim. St. Paul, too, writing to the Ephesians enumerates four orders when he says: 'above all Principality, and Power, and Virtue, and Domination'; and again, writing to the Colossians he says: 'whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers'. If we now join these two lists together we have five Orders, and adding Angels and Archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, we find nine Orders of Angels.

St. Thomas (Summa Theologica I:108), following St. Denis (De Coelesti Hierarchia, vi, vii), divides the angels into three hierarchies each of which contains three orders. Their proximity to the Supreme Being serves as the basis of this division. In the first hierarchy he places the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones; in the second, the Dominations, Virtues, and Powers; in the third, the Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. The only Scriptural names furnished of individual angels are Raphael, Michael, and Gabriel, names which signify their respective attributes. Apocryphal Jewish books, such as the Book of Enoch, supply those of Uriel and Jeremiel, while many are

found in other apocryphal sources, like those Milton names in "Paradise Lost". (On superstitious use of such names, see above).

The number of angels

The number of the angels is frequently stated as prodigious (Daniel 7:10; Apocalypse 5:11; Psalm 67:18; Matthew 26:53). From the use of the word host (*sabaoth*) as a synonym for the heavenly army it is hard to resist the impression that the term "Lord of Hosts" refers to God's Supreme command of the angelic multitude (cf. Deuteronomy 33:2; 32:43; Septuagint). The Fathers see a reference to the relative numbers of men and angels in the parable of the hundred sheep (Luke 15:1-3), though this may seem fanciful. The Scholastics, again, following the treatise "De Coelesti Hierarchia" of St. Denis, regard the preponderance of numbers as a necessary perfection of the angelic host (cf. St. Thomas, Summa Theologica I:1:3).

The evil angels

The distinction of good and bad angels constantly appears in the Bible, but it is instructive to note that there is no sign of any dualism or conflict between two equal principles, one good and the other evil. The conflict depicted is rather that waged on earth between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the Evil One, but the latter's inferiority is always supposed. The existence, then, of this inferior, and therefore created, spirit, has to be explained.

The gradual development of Hebrew consciousness on this point is very clearly marked in the inspired writings. The account of the fall of our First Parents (Genesis 3) is couched in such terms that it is impossible to see in it anything more than the acknowledgment of the existence of a principle of evil who was jealous of the human race. The statement (Genesis 6:1) that the "sons of God" married the daughters of men is explained of the fall of the angels, in Enoch, vi-xi, and codices, D, E F, and A of the Septuagint read frequently, for "sons of God", *oi aggeloi tou theou*. Unfortunately, codices B and C are defective in Genesis 6, but it is probably that they, too, read *oi aggeloi* in this passage, for they constantly so render the expression "sons of

God"; cf. Job 1:6, 2:1 and 38:7; but on the other hand, see Psalm 2:1 and 88 (Septuagint). Philo, in commenting on the passage in his treatise "Quod Deus sit immutabilis", i, follows the Septuagint. For Philo's doctrine of Angels, cf. "De Vita Mosis", iii, 2, "De Somniis", VI: "De Incorrupta Manna", i; "De Sacrificis", ii; "De Lege Allegorica", I, 12; III, 73; and for the view of Genesis 6:1, cf. St. Justin, *First Apology* 5. It should moreover be noted that the Hebrew word *nephilim* rendered *gigantes*, in 6:4, may mean "fallen ones". The Fathers generally refer it to the sons of Seth, the chosen stock. In 1 Samuel 19:9, an evil spirit is said to possess Saul, though this is probably a metaphorical expression; more explicit is 1 Kings 22:19-23, where a spirit is depicted as appearing in the midst of the heavenly army and offering, at the Lord's invitation, to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Achab's false prophets. We might, with Scholastics, explain this is *malum poenae*, which is actually caused by God owing to man's fault. A truer exegesis would, however, dwell on the purely imaginative tone of the whole episode; it is not so much the mould in which the message is cast as the actual tenor of that message which is meant to occupy our attention.

The picture afforded us in Job 1 and 2 is equally imaginative; but Satan, perhaps the earliest individualization of the fallen Angel, is presented as an intruder who is jealous of Job. He is clearly an inferior being to the Deity and can only touch Job with God's permission. How theologic thought advanced as the sum of revelation grew appears from a comparison of 2 Samuel 24:1, with 1 Chronicles 21:1. Whereas in the former passage David's sin was said to be due to "the wrath of the Lord" which "stirred up David", in the latter we read that "Satan moved David to number Israel". In Job 4:18, we seem to find a definite declaration of the fall: "In His angels He found wickedness." The Septuagint of Job contains some instructive passages regarding avenging angels in whom we are perhaps to see fallen spirits, thus 33:23: "If a thousand death-dealing angels should be (against him) not one of them shall wound him"; and 36:14: "If their souls should perish in their youth (through rashness) yet their life shall be wounded by the angels"; and 21:15: "The riches unjustly accumulated shall be vomited up, an angel shall drag him out of his house;" cf. Proverbs 17:11; Psalm 34:5-6 and 77:49, and especially Ecclesiasticus 39:33, a text which, as far as can be gathered from the present state of the

manuscript, was in the Hebrew original. In some of these passages, it is true, the angels may be regarded as avengers of God's justice without therefore being evil spirits. In Zechariah 3:1-3, Satan is called the adversary who pleads before the Lord against Jesus the High Priest. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are for the Fathers the *loci classici* regarding the fall of Satan (cf. Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 2.10); and Our Lord Himself has given colour to this view by using the imagery of the latter passage when saying to His Apostles: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

In New Testament times the idea of the two spiritual kingdoms is clearly established. The devil is a fallen angel who in his fall has drawn multitudes of the heavenly host in his train. Our Lord terms him "the Prince of this world" (John 14:30); he is the tempter of the human race and tries to involve them in his fall (Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 12:7). Christian imagery of the devil as the dragon is mainly derived from the Apocalypse (9:11-15 and 12:7-9), where he is termed "the angel of the bottomless pit", "the dragon", "the old serpent", etc., and is represented as having actually been in combat with Archangel Michael. The similarity between scenes such as these and the early Babylonian accounts of the struggle between Merodach and the dragon Tiamat is very striking. Whether we are to trace its origin to vague reminiscences of the mighty saurians which once people the earth is a moot question, but the curious reader may consult Bousett, "The Anti-Christ Legend" (tr. by Keane, London, 1896). The translator has prefixed to it an interesting discussion on the origin of the Babylonian Dragon-Myth.

The term "angel" in the Septuagint

We have had occasion to mention the Septuagint version more than once, and it may not be amiss to indicate a few passages where it is our only source of information regarding the angels. The best known passage is Isaiah 9:6, where the Septuagint gives the name of the Messiah, as "the Angel of great Counsel". We have already drawn attention to Job 20:15, where the Septuagint reads "Angel" instead of "God", and to 36:14, where there seems to be question of evil angels. In 9:7, Septuagint (B) adds: "He is the Hebrew (5:19) say of

"Behemoth": "He is the beginning of the ways of God, he that made him shall make his sword to approach him", the Septuagint reads: "He is the beginning of God's creation, made for His Angels to mock at", and exactly the same remark is made about "Leviathan" (41:24). We have already seen that the Septuagint generally renders the term "sons of God" by "angels", but in Deuteronomy 32:43, the Septuagint has an addition in which both terms appear: "Rejoice in Him all ye heavens, and adore Him all ye angels of God; rejoice ye nations with His people, and magnify Him all ye Sons of God." Nor does the Septuagint merely give us these additional references to angels; it sometimes enables us to correct difficult passages concerning them in the Vulgate and Massoretic text. Thus the difficult *Elim* of MT in Job 41:17, which the Vulgate renders by "angels", becomes "wild beasts" in the Septuagint version.

The early ideas as to the personality of the various angelic appearances are, as we have seen, remarkably vague. At first the angels are regarded in quite an impersonal way (Genesis 16:7). They are God's vice-regents and are often identified with the Author of their message (Genesis 48:15-16). But while we read of "the Angels of God" meeting Jacob (Genesis 32:1) we at other times read of one who is termed "the Angel of God" *par excellence*, e.g. Genesis 31:11. It is true that, owing to the Hebrew idiom, this may mean no more than "an angel of God", and the Septuagint renders it with or without the article at will; yet the three visitors at Mambre seem to have been of different ranks, though St. Paul (Hebrews 13:2) regarded them all as equally angels; as the story in Genesis 13 develops, the speaker is always "the Lord". Thus in the account of the Angel of the Lord who visited Gideon (Judges 6), the visitor is alternately spoken of as "the Angel of the Lord" and as "the Lord". Similarly, in Judges 13, the Angel of the Lord appears, and both Manue and his wife exclaim: "We shall certainly die because we have seen God." This want of clearness is particularly apparent in the various accounts of the Angel of Exodus. In Judges 6, just now referred to, the Septuagint is very careful to render the Hebrew "Lord" by "the Angel of the Lord"; but in the story of the Exodus it is the Lord who goes before them in the pillar of a cloud (Exodus 13:21), and the Septuagint makes no change (cf. also Numbers 14:14, and Nehemiah 9:7-20. Yet in Exodus 14:19, their guide is termed "the Angel of God". When we turn to Exodus 33,

where God is angry with His people for worshipping the golden calf, it is hard not to feel that it is God Himself who has hitherto been their guide, but who now refuses to accompany them any longer. God offers an angel instead, but at Moses's petition He says (14) "My face shall go before thee", which the Septuagint reads by *autos* though the following verse shows that this rendering is clearly impossible, for Moses objects: "If Thou Thyself dost not go before us, bring us not out of this place." But what does God mean by "my face"? Is it possible that some angel of specially high rank is intended, as in Isaiah 63:9 (cf. Tobit 12:15)? May not this be what is meant by "the angel of God" (cf. Numbers 20:16)?

That a process of evolution in theological thought accompanied the gradual unfolding of God's revelation need hardly be said, but it is especially marked in the various views entertained regarding the person of the Giver of the Law. The Massoretic text as well as the Vulgate of Exodus 3 and 19-20 clearly represent the Supreme Being as appearing to Moses in the bush and on Mount Sinai; but the Septuagint version, while agreeing that it was God Himself who gave the Law, yet makes it "the angel of the Lord" who appeared in the bush. By New Testament times the Septuagint view has prevailed, and it is now not merely in the bush that the angel of the Lord, and not God Himself appears, but the angel is also the Giver of the Law (cf. Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2; Acts 7:30). The person of "the angel of the Lord" finds a counterpart in the personification of Wisdom in the Sapiential books and in at least one passage (Zechariah 3:1) it seems to stand for that "Son of Man" whom Daniel (7:13) saw brought before "the Ancient of Days". Zacharias says: "And the Lord showed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan stood on His right hand to be His adversary". Tertullian regards many of these passages as preludes to the Incarnation; as the Word of God adumbrating the sublime character in which He is one day to reveal Himself to men (cf. *Against Praxeas* 16; *Against Marcion* 2.27, 3.9, 1.10, 1.21-22). It is possible, then, that in these confused views we can trace vague gropings after certain dogmatic truths regarding the Trinity, reminiscences perhaps of the early revelation of which the Protevangelium in Genesis 3 is but a relic. The earlier Fathers, going by the letter of the text, maintained that it was actually God Himself who appeared. He who appeared was called God and acted as God. It

was not unnatural then for Tertullian, as we have already seen, to regard such manifestations in the light of preludes to the Incarnation, and most of the Eastern Fathers followed the same line of thought. It was held as recently as 1851 by Vandembroeck, "Dissertatio Theologica de Theophaniis sub Veteri Testamento" (Louvain).

But the great Latins, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great, held the opposite view, and the Scholastics as a body followed them. St. Augustine (Sermo vii, de Scripturis, P.G. V) when treating of the burning bush (Exodus 3) says: "That the same person who spoke to Moses should be deemed both the Lord and an angel of the Lord, is very hard to understand. It is a question which forbids any rash assertions but rather demands careful investigation . . . Some maintain that he is called both the Lord and the angel of the Lord because he was Christ, indeed the prophet (Isaiah 9:6, Septuagint Version) clearly styles Christ the 'Angel of great Counsel.'" The saint proceeds to show that such a view is tenable though we must be careful not to fall into Arianism in stating it. He points out, however, that if we hold that it was an angel who appeared, we must explain how he came to be called "the Lord," and he proceeds to show how this might be: "Elsewhere in the Bible when a prophet speaks it is yet said to be the Lord who speaks, not of course because the prophet is the Lord but because the Lord is in the prophet; and so in the same way when the Lord condescends to speak through the mouth of a prophet or an angel, it is the same as when he speaks by a prophet or apostle, and the angel is correctly termed an angel if we consider him himself, but equally correctly is he termed 'the Lord' because God dwells in him." He concludes: "It is the name of the indweller, not of the temple." And a little further on: "It seems to me that we shall most correctly say that our forefathers recognized the Lord in the angel," and he adduces the authority of the New Testament writers who clearly so understood it and yet sometimes allowed the same confusion of terms (cf. Hebrews 2:2, and Acts 7:31-33).

The saint discusses the same question even more elaborately, "In Heptateuchum," lib. vii, 54, P.G. III, 558. As an instance of how convinced some of the Fathers were in holding the opposite view, we may note Theodoret's words (In Exod.): "The whole passage (Exodus 3) shows that it was God who appeared to him. But (Moses) called Him

an angel in order to let us know that it was not God the Father whom he saw — for whose angel could the Father be? — but the Only-begotten Son, the Angel of great Counsel" (cf. Eusebius, *Church History* I.2.7; St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3:6). But the view propounded by the Latin Fathers was destined to live in the Church, and the Scholastics reduced it to a system (cf. St. Thomas, *Quaest., Disp., De Potentia*, vi, 8, ad 3am); and for a very good exposition of both sides of the question, cf. "Revue biblique," 1894, 232-247.

Angels in Babylonian literature

The Bible has shown us that a belief in angels, or spirits intermediate between God and man, is a characteristic of the Semitic people. It is therefore interesting to trace this belief in the Semites of Babylonia. According to Sayce (*The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, Gifford Lectures, 1901), the engrafting of Semitic beliefs on the earliest Sumerian religion of Babylonia is marked by the entrance of angels or *sukallin* in their theosophy. Thus we find an interesting parallel to "the angels of the Lord" in Nebo, "the minister of Merodach" (*ibid.*, 355). He is also termed the "angel" or interpreter of the will of Merodach (*ibid.*, 456), and Sayce accepts Hommel's statement that it can be shown from the Minean inscriptions that primitive Semitic religion consisted of moon and star worship, the moon-god Athtar and an "angel" god standing at the head of the pantheon (*ibid.*, 315). The Biblical conflict between the kingdoms of good and evil finds its parallel in the "spirits of heaven" or the Igigi—who constituted the "host" of which Ninip was the champion (and from whom he received the title of "chief of the angels") and the "spirits of the earth", or Annuna-Ki, who dwelt in Hades (*ibid.* 355). The Babylonian *sukalli* corresponded to the spirit-messengers of the Bible; they declared their Lord's will and executed his behests (*ibid.*, 361). Some of them appear to have been more than messengers; they were the interpreters and vicegerents of the supreme deity, thus Nebo is "the prophet of Borsippa". These angels are even termed "the sons" of the deity whose vicegerents they are; thus Ninip, at one time the messenger of En-lil, is transformed into his son just as Merodach becomes the son of Ea (*ibid.*, 496). The Babylonian accounts of the Creation and the Flood do not contrast very favourably with the Biblical accounts, and the same must be said of

the chaotic hierarchies of gods and angels which modern research has revealed. perhaps we are justified in seeing all forms of religion vestiges of a primitive nature-worship which has at times succeeded in debasing the purer revelation, and which, where that primitive revelation has not received successive increments as among the Hebrews, results in an abundant crop of weeds.

Thus the Bible certainly sanctions the idea of certain angels being in charge of special districts (cf. Daniel 10, and above). This belief persists in a debased form in the Arab notion of Genii, or Jinns, who haunt particular spots. A reference to it is perhaps to be found in Genesis 32:1-2: "Jacob also went on the journey he had begun: and the angels of God met him: And when he saw then he said: These are the camps of God, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim, that is, 'Camps.'" Recent explorations in the Arab district about Petra have revealed certain precincts marked off with stones as the abiding-places of angels, and the nomad tribes frequent them for prayer and sacrifice. These places bear a name which corresponds exactly with the "Mahanaim" of the above passage in Genesis (cf. Lagrange, *Religions Semitiques*, 184, and Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 445). Jacob's vision at Bethel (Genesis 28:12) may perhaps come under the same category. Suffice it to say that not everything in the Bible is revelation, and that the object of the inspired writings is not merely to tell us new truths but also to make clearer certain truths taught us by nature. The modern view, which tends to regard everything Babylonian as absolutely primitive and which seems to think that because critics affix a late date to the Biblical writings the religion therein contained must also be late, may be seen in Haag, "Theologie Biblique" (339). This writer sees in the Biblical angels only primitive deities debased into demi-gods by the triumphant progress of Monotheism.

Angels in the Zend-Avesta

Attempts have also been made to trace a connection between the angels of the Bible and the "great archangels" or "Amesha-Spentas" of the Zend-Avesta. That the Persian domination and the Babylonian captivity exerted a large influence upon the Hebrew conception of the

angels is acknowledged in the Talmud of Jerusalem, Rosch Haschanna, 56, where it is said that the names of the angels were introduced from Babylon. It is, however, by no means clear that the angelic beings who figure so largely in the pages of the Avesta are to be referred to the older Persian Neo-Zoroastrianism of the Sassanides. If this be the case, as Darmesteter holds, we should rather reverse the position and attribute the Zoroastrian angels to the influence of the Bible and of Philo. Stress has been laid upon the similarity between the Biblical "seven who stand before God" and the seven Amesha-Spentas of the Zend-Avesta. But it must be noted that these latter are really six, the number seven is only obtained by counting "their father, Ahura-Mazda," among them as their chief. Moreover, these Zoroastrian archangels are more abstract than concrete; they are not individuals charged with weighty missions as in the Bible.

Angels in the New Testament

Hitherto we have dwelt almost exclusively on the angels of the Old Testament, whose visits and messages have been by no means rare; but when we come to the New Testament their name appears on every page and the number of references to them equals those in the Old Dispensation. It is their privilege to announce to Zachary and Mary the dawn of Redemption, and to the shepherds its actual accomplishment. Our Lord in His discourses talks of them as one who actually saw them, and who, whilst "conversing amongst men", was yet receiving the silent unseen adoration of the hosts of heaven. He describes their life in heaven (Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:36); He tell us how they form a bodyguard round Him and at a word from Him would avenge Him on His enemies (Matthew 26:53); it is the privilege of one of them to assist Him in His Agony and sweat of Blood. More than once He speaks of them as auxiliaries and witnesses at the final judgment (Matthew 16:27), which indeed they will prepare (13:39-49); and lastly, they are the joyous witnesses of His triumphant Resurrection (28:2).

It is easy for skeptical minds to see in these angelic hosts the mere play of Hebrew fancy and the rank growth of superstition, but do not the records of the angels who figure in the Bible supply a most natural and harmonious progression? In the opening page of the sacred story

of the Jewish nation is chose out from amongst others as the depositary of God's promise; as the people from whose stock He would one day raise up a Redeemer. The angels appear in the course of this chosen people's history, now as God's messengers, now as that people's guides; at one time they are the bestowers of God's law, at another they actually prefigure the Redeemer Whose divine purpose they are helping to mature. They converse with His prophets, with David and Elias, with Daniel and Zacharias; they slay the hosts camped against Israel, they serve as guides to God's servants, and the last prophet, Malachi, bears a name of peculiar significance; "the Angel of Jehovah." He seems to sum up in his very name the previous "ministry by the hands of angels", as though God would thus recall the old-time glories of the Exodus and Sinai. The Septuagint, indeed, seems not to know his name as that of an individual prophet and its rendering of the opening verse of his prophecy is peculiarly solemn: "The burden of the Word of the Lord of Israel by the hand of His angel; lay it up in your hearts." All this loving ministry on the part of the angels is solely for the sake of the Saviour, on Whose face they desire to look. Hence when the fullness of time was arrived it is they who bring the glad message, and sing "Gloria in excelsis Deo". They guide the newborn King of Angels in His hurried flight into Egypt, and minister to Him in the desert. His second coming and the dire events that must precede that, are revealed to His chosen servant in the island of Patmos, It is a question of revelation again, and consequently its ministers and messengers of old appear once more in the sacred story and the record of God's revealing love ends fittingly almost as it had begun: "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches" (Revelation 22:16). It is easy for the student to trace the influence of surrounding nations and of other religions in the Biblical account of the angels. Indeed it is needful and instructive to do so, but it would be wrong to shut our eyes to the higher line of development which we have shown and which brings out so strikingly the marvellous unity and harmony of the whole divine story of the Bible. (See also ANGELS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ART.)